THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) the visit of pilgrims between India and Pakistan is covered under the bilateral "Protocal on visits to Religious Shrines-1974". The Protocal provides for the number of pilgrims, pilgrimage centres and the frequency of such visits between India and Pakistan. During the Secretary (Culture) level talks held in Islamabad on July 26-27, 2005, it was agreed to expand the 1974 bilateral Protocol to increase the number of shrines in both countries as also the number of pilgrims.

During the visit of former EAM to Pakistan from October 2-5,2005 for a review meeting of the Composite Dialogue, the Indian side, *inter alia,* presented a draft proposal in this regard to the Pakistani side. Pakistan has not responded to the proposal.

Amendments in Plantation Labour Act

1724. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have started the process of making necessary amendments in the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 and make it more relevant to the current industrial scenario;

(b) by when final decision in this regard is likely to be taken; and

(c) the main amendments proposed and to what extent it would be helpful?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRA SEKHAR RAO): (a) to (c) Consultation on the amendments to the Plantations Labour Act, 1951 has been taken up at Tripartite fora. Measures for amendment can only be taken after consensus is arrived at.

Rate of EPF contribution

1725. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the rate of contribution of Employees Provident Fund being transferred to Pension Fund at present;

(b) whether it is proposed to transfer greater amount towards 'Pension Fund' so that, employees can get higher pension on superannuation;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRA SEKHAR RAO): (a) According to the provisions of Para 3 of the Employees' pension scheme, 1995, Pension Fund Contribution @ 8.33% of employee's wage is payable from and out of the employer's share of Provident Fund contribution in each month by the employer within 15 days of close of every month. The Central Government also contributes @ 1.16% of the wage of the member.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) Do not arise in view of (b) above.

Contract Labour in SEZ's

1726. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether any demand has been raised for contract labour in Special Economic Zone, export oriented units, small and medium enterprises involved in export as a part of time bound strategy to make them globally competitive;

(b) if so, whether any decision has been taken in this regard;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. CHANDRA SEKHAR RAO): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) The demand for allowing engagement of contract labour in Special Economic Zones etc. requires amendment to the Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, 1970 which is not under consideration at present.

Child labourers

1727. PROF. R.B.S. VARMA:
SHRI BALAVANT *ALIAS* BAL APTE:

Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state: